

Central Region's scholars go on to college life

The 2004 DCFS Scholarship recipients are adjusting to campus life and all the academic challenges that come along. Fortunately, they have more than a little help. The scholarship covers tuition and academic costs at any of the nine participating Illinois state institutions, and provide a monthly stipend of \$445 and a medical card for up to four years. These students, whose cases are handled in the Central Region, were selected from among more than 250 applicants. Their high school achievements and personal resilience will surely help them as they go forward in this new stage. They also can take with them the pride and good wishes of the caregivers and professionals who continue to offer support and encouragement.



Matthew Boeck

Matthew Boeck, of Normal, is a 2004 graduate of Normal Community High School. He now is a student at Illinois State University, planning to major in acting and theatre education. In high school, Michael participated in the German Club, Drama Club as President, Film Club, and Thespian Troupe. He is an extremely talented artist and actor. He directed and played key roles in many school and community theatrical productions. Matthew's employment history includes being a server at Linkin's Restaurant, maintenance work at Illinois Wesleyan University and a stock/sales associate at Metropolis Comics. He has volunteered serving meals at Home Sweet Home Mission and being a peer educator at Planned Parenthood.



Michael Cruz

Michael Cruz is a resident of Champaign. He currently attends Parkland Community College where he has earned academic honors and plans to major in Computer Networking. While attending Parkland, he helped to create the Student Alliance for Multi-cultural Education organization. Michael completed his GED requirements in 2003.

While living at Cunningham Children's Home, Michael was president of the Youth Advisory Board and a member of the basketball, soccer, and track teams. Michael has an extensive employment history, which includes jobs in remodeling, landscaping, food service, computer repair and maintenance. He has also served as a volunteer at the Ace Computer Camp.



Nicole Fiala

Nicole Fiala, of Atwood, is a 2004 graduate of Atwood-Hammond High School. Nicole attends Parkland Community College and plans to eventually become a Physical Therapist specializing in Sports Medicine. In high school she was an Honor Roll student and a member of the National Honor Society. Nicole also participated in volleyball, student council, and basketball. Her volunteer activities include the American Cancer Society, DARE Role Model, and the Big Brother/Big Sister Program. She has been employed with several businesses and has gained experience as an office assistant, sales associate, child care provider and cashier.

Scholarship recipients, con't.



Daphne Hannan

Daphne Hannan, of Danville, is a 2002 graduate of Danville High School where she has tutored high school students preparing for college. She has also been a volunteer mentor in the Big Brother/Big Sister program. While in high school, Daphne joined the Academy of Medical Sciences and obtained a certification as a nurse's assistant. She works as a Certified Nursing Assistant and currently attends Danville Community College.



Katina Jarrett

Katina Jarrett currently lives in Melbourne, Arkansas. She is a 2003 graduate of Melbourne High School where she participated in the Beta Club, Band, Choir, History Club and Library Club. Her employment history includes being a State Farm Insurance representative, a secretary for a law firm, and a sales associate for Gadzooks. Katina was a recipient of the Arkansas Challenge Scholarship. She is currently attending Arkansas State University and plans to major in psychology.

Anthony Maheu

Anthony Maheu, of Macomb, is a 2004 graduate of Macomb High School. He now attends Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. Anthony plans a double major in psychology and criminal justice.

His high school accomplishments include being an honor roll student while taking advanced classes. Anthony participated in football, wrestling, SADD, and the Spanish Club. He is a blood donor and was employed by Coca-Cola.



Jessica Rodrigues

Jessica Rodrigues, of Petersburg, graduated in 2004 from PORTA High School. She now attends Illinois State University and plans to major in psychology. In high school Jessica was an honor student and participated in band, POMS as team captain, choir, Spanish Club, Library Club, Key Club, and Thespians. She is a talented singer and plays the clarinet. Jessica has worked at Pizza Hut and Dairy Queen. She volunteered at the Menard County Convalescent Center and tutored elementary students.



Mia Witherell

Mia Witherell, of Chandlerville, is a 2004 graduate of A-C Central High School where she participated in FFA, Pep Club, STAR, and cheerleading. Mia served as a volunteer interpreter for a hearing impaired teacher. She has worked as a telemarketer, in several restaurants, and in a car dealership. She plans to attend Lincoln Land Community College and major in nursing or social work. Mia's goal is to become a Registered Nurse and work with children.

4-H Project Benefits Pekin Visiting Rooms

Heather Leman, the 13-year-old daughter of foster parents Wayne and Julie Leman, decided she wanted to make a difference in the lives of foster children. With a lot of hard work, Heather made a presentation of books and toys to the Pekin Field Office for use in the rooms when children come to visit with their birth families.

Heather is a member of 4-H Club which provides youth the opportunity to learn new things, develop new skills, travel to new places and experience new situations. For this year's 4-H county fair, Heather chose to do a project in Community Services to benefit young people served by the Pekin office.

During the time that Wayne and Julie have been foster parents, Heather has helped out and befriended the children in their family. Earlier this year, when two girls came home from a visit and commented on the quality of the toys in the visiting rooms, Heather decided to buy new books and toys to improve the time children spend in the visiting rooms.

In order to raise money for the books and toys, Heather organized bake sales of her own baked goods and babysat. It took about two months of hard work, but Heather was able to raise enough money for a large basket overflowing with books and toys for the children to enjoy.

Customer Satisfaction lines

The Central Region has established three toll-free phone lines for DCFS-supervised homes if foster parents have concerns they have been unable to resolve through normal channels. The lines will be monitored Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., excluding state holidays. Emergency calls should still be directed to the local field office. The customer satisfaction phone numbers are:

- **Springfield Sub-Region**
866-368-5205
- **Champaign Sub-Region**
866-368-5203
- **Peoria Sub-Region**
866-368-5204

Each line will be equipped with voice mail. The goal is to have a response time of 24 hours to all calls. The individual responsible for each line will personally route calls appropriately, and also will check on the resolution within five business days.

Callers may use these lines for issues such as financial matters, licensing, respite or child protection. However, issues appropriate for a service appeal should be handled via a service appeal and not through this system. These lines were not designed to handle calls from private agency homes, but any messages will be routed back to the appropriate agency.

DCFS Operations Exec explains local cuts with other supports in place

To our foster parents in the Central Region:

The Illinois Legislature reduced the DCFS annual budget by \$77 million recently. All levels within our agency were asked to work smarter and more focused at the “essentials only” level of delivery. This resulted in cuts in some contracts. Since our population of children in care has fallen below 19,000 we have realigned our energies and resources to focus on quality instead of quantity. One difficult, but necessary, cut was to reduce the level of Foster Parent Support Specialists. These individuals work with families in DCFS-supervised foster homes.

The foster parent support specialist role will continue in the regions. Coverage is being realigned and some activities are being eliminated or shifted to other areas of the department. These changes will allow the remaining foster parent support specialists to focus on homes in which our children and youth are placed. As the changes play out, DCFS families can contact the customer satisfaction line in their sub-region. That will allow individuals to track concerns until they are resolved.

Many other support programs for foster parents remain in place. DCFS will continue with the Foster Parent training modules required for re-licensing and

available to new licensing applicants for skill building. New course offerings are underway (see article on page 8.) Caregivers can also participate in the regional advisory councils and the State-wide Foster Care Advisory Council. Additionally, the information shared in this periodical serves to inform caregivers of significant events, program changes and resource information. Finally, caregivers will of course continue to receive active support from the caseworkers assigned to the children in their homes. If you are experiencing problems that are not being addressed by your caseworker please contact the supervisor or manager for assistance.

Although fostering children will continue to challenge many homes and communities, DCFS will continue to provide supports to both. In the year ahead, we are committed to providing even more developmental services to foster homes throughout the state. We highly value our caregivers and will not lose sight of your immeasurable contribution to the children and families we all serve.

Sincerely,
Arthur Bishop
DCFS Deputy Director for Operations

New trainings coming on asthma, sexual behavior problems and policy updates

The schedules for in-service training had to be put on hold due to the state budget delays. However, the Office of Training stayed busy developing new offerings for caregivers. Look for updated schedules in the next issue of the newsletter or contact the DCFS training college.

Asthma training

This new foster parent in-service training on caring for children with Asthma is based on training initially developed by the Office of the Inspector General for child welfare staff. Asthma is a chronic disease that affects many children and requires environmental and medical management by caregivers. It is the most common chronic illness in children, the leading cause of school absenteeism and is the third leading cause of hospitalization in children under age 15. It is estimated that between 12% and 25% of wards have Asthma. The two and one-half hour in-service training will address the implications of caring for children with Asthma.

Understanding and Working with Children with Sexual Behavior Problems

This two-day training which was developed at the request of caregivers will be provided in a team setting and introduce sweeping

new changes in philosophy, policy and service delivery when supporting children with sexual behavior problems. Review and feedback of the curriculum by foster parents and the High End SBP Committee has already been completed. Plans for additional review of the curriculum are being made. A pilot training may be scheduled for this winter.

Updated information from DCFS

The new in-service training module will focus on keeping caregivers informed of new programs, initiatives and changes to DCFS Rule and Procedure. The module will be updated frequently. The classroom time required to complete this module has not been determined yet. This training was piloted at the DCFS Cook North region earlier this year. The content includes:

- Identifying how foster parents support achieving desired outcomes for children in their care
- Applying specific behaviors and actions that are included in the PRIDE competencies toward achieving permanency
- Introducing the Illinois Model of Integrated Assessment and the changes it brings to child welfare practice
- Connecting the results of the Integrated Assessment to the

process for developing a comprehensive Family Service Plan

- Identifying changes in child welfare practice associated with the Client Service Planning Process

For more information on courses or scheduling, contact the Training College listed below:

- **Champaign Area**
888-467-6065
- **Peoria Area**
888-507-7433
- **Springfield Area**
888-817-1825

Central Connections

Sponsor

Deborah Kennedy, DCFS
Central Regional Administrator

Regional Reporter

Tina Frier
2001 N.E. Jefferson St.
Peoria, IL 61603
Phone: 309-671-7913
Fax: 309-671-7906
E-mail: Tfrier@idcfs.state.il.us

Call with foster parent association news and schedules of local training, features on foster families and community members working for children, photos and news articles and supports all foster, adoptive and guardianship families can use.